

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant comprising (A) a carboxylic group-containing water-insoluble water absorbent resin and (B) a polyvalent metal compound, which material exhibits an ~~absorbing speed~~ (absorption capacity in deionized water for 10 minutes **[D]**) in the range of 20 - 500 g/g and has a weight average particle diameter in the range of 200 - 10,000  $\mu\text{m}$ , wherein an amount of a monovalent counterion of the carboxylic group-containing water-insoluble absorbent resin is in a range of 10 to 65 mol%.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant comprising (A) a carboxylic group-containing water-insoluble water absorbent resin and (B) a polyvalent metal compound, and which material exhibits a calcium gradual release index of more than 0 and not more than 50 mg/L and has a weight average particle diameter in the range of 200 - 10,000  $\mu\text{m}$ , wherein an amount of a monovalent counterion of the carboxylic group-containing water-insoluble absorbent resin is in a range of 10 to 65 mol%.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein the calcium gradual release index is in

the range of 1.0 - 20 mg/L and a saturated absorption capacity is in the range of 20 - 1,000 g/g.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (B) the polyvalent metal compound is contained in the range of 10 - 50 wt. % based on ~~[[in]]~~ the weight of said water retaining material for cultivating plant.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (B) said polyvalent metal compound is present on the surface of (A) said water absorbent resin.

Claim 6 (Original): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 5, wherein (B) said polyvalent metal compound adheres to and/or coats or deposits on the surface of (A) said water absorbent resin.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (B) said polyvalent metal compound in the range of 10 - 50 wt. % based on said particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant is present on the surface of (A) said water absorbent resin.

Claim 8 (Canceled)

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein ~~[[the]]~~ a water content of the particulate water retaining material is in the range of 1 - 30 wt. %.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein the solubility of (B) said polyvalent metal compound in 100 g of deionized water at 20°C is more than 0 and not more than 10.0g.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (B) said polyvalent metal compound contains calcium ~~essentially~~ and also contains at least one element selected from the group consisting of magnesium, iron, and silicon.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (B) said polyvalent metal compound contains a calcium compound.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (B) said polyvalent metal compound contains at least one compound selected from the group consisting of calcium sulfate, calcium hydroxide, and calcium carbonate.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (B) said polyvalent metal compound is an ash of incineration.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein (A) said water absorbent resin is a polymer obtained by polymerizing acrylic acid and/or a salt thereof as a monomer.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): A particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1, wherein the amount of a soluble component of (A) said water absorbent resin is less than 10 wt. %.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): A method for the production of a water retaining material for cultivating plant comprising (A) a carboxylic acid-group containing water-insoluble particulate water absorbent resin and (B) a polyvalent metal compound, wherein an amount of a monovalent counterion of the carboxylic group-containing water-insoluble absorbent resin is in a range of 10 to 65 mol%, which method comprises a step of mixing (A) said water absorbent resin in a state having a water content in the range of 0 - 50 wt. % and (B) said polyvalent metal compound in the range of 10 - 50 wt. % based on the weight of the solid component of (A) ~~said water absorbent resin in a form of solution or a slurry.~~

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): A method for the production of a water retaining material for cultivating plant comprising (A) a carboxylic acid-containing water-insoluble particulate water absorbent resin and (B) a polyvalent metal compound, wherein an amount of a monovalent counterion of the carboxylic group-containing water-insoluble absorbent resin is in a range of 10 to 65 mol%, which method comprises a step of mixing (A) said water absorbent resin having a water content in the range of 50 - 20

wt. % and (B) said polyvalent metal compound in the form of a slurry or a powder containing said polyvalent metal compound at a concentration of not less than 50 wt. %.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): A method for the production of a water retaining material for cultivating plant comprising (A) a carboxylic acid-containing water-insoluble particulate water absorbent resin and (B) a polyvalent metal compound, wherein an amount of a monovalent counterion of the carboxylic group-containing water-insoluble absorbent resin is in a range of 10 to 65 mol%, which method comprises a step of mixing (A) said water absorbent resin in the state of a powder having a water content in the range of 0 - 20 wt. % and (B) said polyvalent metal compound in the state of a powder and subsequently adding the resultant mixture and an aqueous liquid or steam together and mixing them.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 17, wherein (A) said water absorbent resin is a polymer obtained by polymerizing acrylic acid and/or a salt thereof as a monomer.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): A method for cultivating plant ~~by using~~ comprising providing water to a plant from a particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant according to claim 1.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended): A method for cultivating plant according to claim 21, wherein said particulate water retaining material for cultivating plant is mixed with ~~either~~ a plant growth grade carrier and the incorporated amount is in the range of 1 - 30 wt. %.